

Natural Hazards Research Australia

Incorporating the Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC

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**Friday, 7 October 22**

The Senate
Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam,

Subject: Inquiry into the Emergency Response Fund Amendment (Disaster Ready Fund) Bill 2022

Natural Hazards Research Australia welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the inquiry into the Emergency Response Fund Amendment (Disaster Ready Fund) Bill 2022.

Natural Hazards Research Australia is a not-for-profit organisation, funded by the Australian Government. Our mission is to work with partners and the community on research that is useful, actionable and supportive of better decision-making to save lives and protect communities. Our partners include federal, state and local governments, key industry bodies, the private and not-for-profit sectors, research and other organisations.

Today's disasters that are caused by natural hazards, although natural at the core, in reality reflect the culmination of our collective decisions of where and how we live and how we manage and care for the world around us.

Recent floods, storms and bushfires in Australia, against a backdrop of severe natural hazards events internationally, highlight the need for a better understanding of how to prepare for, respond to and recover from natural hazard disasters.

The complexity of natural hazard risk is growing across Australia, as populations continue to expand into higher risk areas, combined with socio-economic pressures, interconnected infrastructure systems, and the growing impacts of climate change.

At present the vast majority of disaster-related expenditure is directed towards response and recovery, rather than reducing the disaster risk upfront. Now, more than ever, it is vital to invest in ways that reduce the risks from disasters.

Further investment in disaster risk reduction will assist to reduce the overall national costs arising from the impacts of natural hazards as well as contribute to building safer, more resilient and sustainable communities.

Research conducted by Natural Hazards Research Australia, and our predecessor organisations, provides evidence regarding the economic effectiveness of targeted, scientifically based disaster risk reduction investments. For example, research examining flood mitigation options in the Launceston region showed how investments in flood mitigation were a sound economic decision. Research in cyclone prone regions of Australia found that a combination of community education and resilience measures at the household level are both cost effective and successful under high winds.

These are just two examples of how research can show that investments that reduce the risk not only impact direct costs upon the community but also reduce the social costs associated with natural hazard events, which can be long term in their nature.



Research and innovation are essential enablers that underpin effective decision making in disaster risk reduction in the face of future natural hazard events.

Investments must be risk-based and informed through the identification of the highest-priority disaster risks and mitigation opportunities. Investments must draw on sound research and expertise to consider future challenges such as climate and demographic change.

If you have any questions or require further information, please contact myself.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Gissing

CEO, Natural Hazards Research Australia